

# Weeding a Periodical Collection in the Academic Environment: A Case Study

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## Why?

There are some very good reasons for weeding serial collections in an academic environment: keeping the collection current and/or appropriate to the primary needs of the teaching and research in the institution; preservation or conservation purposes; or, to make room on the shelves for more titles or volumes or both. Most academic libraries are not blest with unending space, so room on the shelves becomes a mandate of sizeable proportions. Since this is the greatest cause of weeding projects, we will base the presentation on those needs.

## Possibilities?

First is an assessment of the condition of the Collection. If you can do some minor reorganization of the Collection to use boxes, binders or other means to compact the materials already housed, that is good. We found that

creating half-sized boxes that were only 2 inches wide, instead of 4 inches, saved us a great amount of space as we moved through the Collection. Many times you are housing only a few issues that could not be bound among others that are bound, so wasting those extra two inches is unnecessary. Perhaps there are completed volumes that have not been bound yet and binding them will save some space, as well as looking better. Will you continue to keep ceased titles on the open shelves, or move them to storage areas? If they ceased over ten years ago, they are probably seeing very little use and can reside in a less used/visited area of the library or even off-campus storage site. We did not have that option available to us.

Once the assessment has been done, note the areas which can be changed to save space and proceed with those changes. Will you be reassessing subject matter? Will you consider replacing some print items with a microform or electronic substitute? Make sure you consider as many alternatives as possible so that your options are numerous.

Procedure?

Assess the collection – Reorganize the materials – Review titles – Review Holdings of Titles – Change Formats where possible – Physical removal.

Congratulations, you now have a new concise Collection. At Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, our Reference Librarians evaluate titles we submit to them and decide on what we will keep or change. I create an Excel sheet with the journal titles, holdings, status (current/ceased), price, shelving requirements (no. of shelves of occupancy), full-text availability, microform availability and price per reel. The Reference Librarians, sometimes with the help of their liaison connections, split the list among themselves and determine the necessity of the journal to classroom and research needs, whether it is better to keep older volumes on another format, how many years to keep on the shelves, and return that advice to me, so that action can be taken for the good of the Collection. We try to do evaluation in a subject arrangement, so that all the engineering or computer journals, e.g. are done at the same time. We do acknowledge that there are a core of journals that we will continue to receive and house no matter what, so those need not be reevaluated. We also try to limit the evaluation time to just several weeks per list, so that we can continue to clean the Collection and make room for newer and sometimes more valuable materials. We are learning more about the process with each list we tackle and we are revising our strategies as we go further. Next year, we hope to present a more complete picture of our

results and what we have discovered in the processing of these materials.

Join us then!

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